

Institution for Savings
Northeast corner of William and Second Streets
New Bedford
Bristol County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-684

HABS
MASS,
3-NEBED,
18-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

INSTITUTION FOR SAVINGS

HABS
MASS,
3-NEBED,
18-

Address: Northeast corner of William and Second Streets,
New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts

Present Owner
and Occupant: Johnson's, Inc., William and Second Streets,
New Bedford, Massachusetts

Present Use: Automobile parts sales and machine shop

Brief Statement
of Significance: A commercial building erected at the peak of
New Bedford's prosperity, which is a rare extant
example of Italian Renaissance influence on mid-
nineteenth century American architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Originally built for the New Bedford Institution for Savings. From 1897 to about 1940 or 1950 used by the Third District Court, presumably owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, then purchased by Johnson's, Inc. [A. Downing abstracts; interview with Mr. Johnson].
2. Date of erection: 1853 [A. Downing abstracts, p. 97].
3. Architect: Russell Warren [ibid.].

In my opinion, some doubt is cast on this attribution by the presence of a nearly identical facade in Providence, Rhode Island, on the Providence Institution for Savings, erected in 1854, C. G. and J. R. Hall, architects [see John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence (Providence, R. I.: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 124-126].

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The main portion was a single large room, with a wing attached at the rear [from observation].
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Original building appears very little altered, except for paneling added on interior rear wall when adapted for a court of law. Two additions were made to the rear at an undetermined time [from observation].

6. Important old views: An undated stereo pair, unnamed photographer, in the possession of the New Bedford Free Public Library, shows the south and west fronts of the building as they appear now, but with the name, "Institution for Savings," in the panel on the facade. This photograph must antedate the conversion of the building to a Court.
 7. Sources of information: Antoinette F. Downing, Report on the Historical and Architectural Merit of the Buildings in or near the Area between Union and William-Hamilton Streets and Acushnet Avenue and the Waterfront in New Bedford, Massachusetts (New Bedford: City Planning Department, 1961), p. 9.
- B. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Records of the Third District Court, Massachusetts.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A monumental bank building of the mid-nineteenth century, now deteriorated, unaltered except for the addition of rear wings, which incorporates Italian Renaissance details on the exterior and Greek Revival details on the interior.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure appears sound. Much of the exterior sandstone has weathered and the surface flaked off. Interior finish has deteriorated, and in places the plaster is coming off the ceiling of the main banking room.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main portion approximately 39' wide by 51' long; rear wing approximately 24' long by 30' wide--these dimensions refer to the original building. The facade fronts south. One story.
2. Foundations: Granite ashlar, in form of a classic podium.
3. Wall construction: Brick. The units are characteristic of early nineteenth century New Bedford work, fairly hard and uniform, laid with 1/8" to 3/16" joints. Bricks are 7" to 7 1/2" x 3 1/2" to 3 5/8" x 2 1/8". The entire south front is of sandstone ashlar.
4. Porches, stoops: On the south front is a complex treatment leading to the entrance. The foundation podium extends as a solid railing, flanking a monumental granite stairway.

Above it appears the sandstone balustrades of two balconies--one at each front window. The effect resembles a terrace, but it is not floored.

At the south side of the building, in the reentrant angle between it and an added wing, is a small porch sheltering a secondary entrance. It has **granite** steps and floor, and one wooden Doric column with entablature.

5. Openings: Trim of doors and windows is of sandstone.

- a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance doorway is centered on south front; it has moulded jambs and a pediment with consoles.
- b. Windows: The two front windows resemble the doorway, but have straight cornices instead of a pediment over them. Windows on the east and west side walls--three on each--have a rather blocky cornice over them. Jambs are plain. Double hung wood sash, six light over six light. No shutters.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gabled; now covered with composition roofing. Pitch is fairly low.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A full classic entablature serves as cornice to the building. It carries across the south front as a pediment, but on the north end is merely returned at the corners. The cornice, frieze, and architrave are each of one course of sandstone.
- c. Dormers, cupolas: None.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

- 1. Floor plans: Main part of original buildings is a single room, with a smaller room in the north wing. Two additions appear to have been made at the east and north of this wing; they form a single space today.
- 2. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted. Ceiling is in form of a segmental barrel vault, with large coffers. Wood lath is visible in places where ceiling plaster has come loose.
- 3. Trim: Plaster cornice in main room, with Greek details, made up of cornice and architrave--no frieze.

Window trim is of wood, wide and quite heavy, crosssetted and battered.

D. Site

This building is at the northeast corner of a downtown city block, at the sidewalk line. There is no enclosure.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1961